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Fortnightly Sermon

By
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Minister Third Unitarian Church
CHICAGO ILL.

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at first, and showing only his great size, but coming out at last with all his beautiful shape and mighty strength. We know more about the books of the New Testament; but even about many of them we know very little, they are so old, so wonderful, and tell such grand, strange things. So that for many hundreds of years since the Bible was finished and the New Testament was written, and all had grown old, this book has been the one which we have looked on with great awe. People have taught their little children to lisp its sayings and to believe them the words of God. Men have gone to it for help and comfort in all troubles and struggles. They have looked into it to learn what to think of God, of life, death, duty. They have thought even that the Bible was the only source of knowledge of these things, and that there would be no religion, no knowledge of God, no help in life, no hope in death, if the Bible were taken away. For hundreds of years people have believed everything in it and thought every word of it was true. Even when it said things that contradicted each other, people have believed them both just the same, without seeing that both could not be true. It has been a sacred book, revered, worshiped, read with awe and with fear, also with hope and with love. People have rested on it their whole religion. It has been believed that God himself was the author of the book; that he guided the minds and the pens of the men who wrote it and told them what to say; that it is all divine, perfect, wholly true; and that we must obey it and trust to it altogether. Sometimes it has been thought there were some errors in it, some places, or even books, in which men wrote of themselves without divine guidance; but only very few such places, and all the rest of it the true and perfect word of God.

But now a great change has come over our way of looking at the Bible. Men look not on it with the awe which once they felt. They reverence its grand, glorious thoughts and the great deeds told in it just the same; but they are learning that there are very many mistakes in it, very many things also which are not noble and true but belong to the unfinished and wild times in which the writings sprang up. Men are ceasing to think that cruel acts and hard feelings, stealing, slave-holding, and other bad things, are good and right because the Scriptures say

God commanded them or permitted them; or that ever such things were good, or that God ever did, or ever could, command them. When Joshua, as the Bible says, took many cities of Canaan and left not a single human being alive in them, either men, women or children, but slew them all, and sometimes in very cruel ways, men used to say that it was right because God commanded it, and that we knew God commanded it because the Bible says so; but now we say that it was wrong, and therefore God could not command it, and that the assertion of the Scriptures that he did command it is no proof at all. We say that in these places we have not the divine nature and commands, but the nature, cruelties and wars of a wild time and of a half-savage people. We have learned also that there are many places in the Bible which deny each other; that the same thing is told in two or three different ways very often, so that they cannot all be true.* We have found out also that the

*Many contradictions in the Bible can be perceived and understood only after a study of the books sufficient to give one a *sense* of the fact of the different authorship of different books, and even of different parts or the same book. Also it is to be said that the inconsistencies are of inferior consequence in the main. But this last remark is true only as regards the high and valuable substance of the Bible, both as history and as religion. If the Bible be viewed as a divine revelation above human accidents or production, then the contradictions are very important, because, on this view, there ought to be none at all. With this preface, compare Gen. xv, 13 with 16 and Exod. xii, 40, wherein the servitude of the Israelites in Egypt is stated at 400 years and again at only four generations: Compare Exod. xii, 37 and 38, wherein, with 600,000 fighting men, beside women and children, and a mixed multitude, it is plain that the people must have numbered not less than 2,000,000, with Deut. vii, 7 and Exod. xxiii, 27-30, wherein the people are called "few" and so weak in numbers that the inhabitants of little Canaan must be driven out gradually by the Lord, lest the wild animals should increase and possess the land against the Israelites: compare Deut. i, 35-38, iii, 23-28, with Numbers xx, 7-12, xxvii, 12-14, in which passages it is stated that Moses was forbidden to enter Canaan because he must share the condemnation of the whole people, and yet contrariwise,—because *he himself* had sinned at the rock, either by incredulity or by a self-glorifying manner: Compare Joshua xii, 7-24 and xiv, 6-10, from which it appears that Joshua overran the whole land and defeated thirty-one kings in five years; with Joshua xv, 13-16, Judges I. i, 10-13, wherein it appears that others subdued Hebron and its dependencies after the death of Joshua; with Joshua xvi, 10, Judges i, 29, which state that Gezer was *not* conquered, notwithstanding Joshua x, 33: Compare 1 Sam. xvii, about David and Goliath, with 2 Sam. xxi, 19, where it is said that it was one Elhanan who slew Goliath; but in this reference the reader must consult the Revised Version, for the Common Version adds words not in the Hebrew, in order to make the passage agree with 1 Sam. xvii on the one hand, and with 1 Chron. xx, 5, on the other hand; see "Bible for Learners," Roberts Bros., Boston, Vol. I, p. 506; and if this note meet the eye of any one who not yet has read the above translation of the admirable work of the Dutch Scholars, let me say that it will give him of the great Book a knowledge so fresh, so vivid, living and reasonable, that he will find it as stirring as a romance and as instructive as documentary history: Compare Mt. i, ii, Luke i, ii, 1-39, the miraculous birth, the magi, the angels, etc., with the evident

books and parts of books (for even the same books seem often written by different hands) are of many different dates;* that each one shows the state of the people's minds at that date to which the book belongs; that the books treat the same fact or idea very differently because they were viewed diversely by the people at different dates in their history; and that we can trace in these books not one settled religious state, but slow growth from a low and barbarous condition to the milder traits and higher thoughts which we find clustering about Jesus.

Besides all this, we meet another very striking fact; it is this: Whenever we read the history of any people (no matter what one; they are all alike in this), we find far back in the beginning a crowd of stories like the magic tales of the Arabians or like the fairy tales which children enjoy. Always these are religious and patriotic stories; that is, they show the people's awe of powers and beings whom they looked up to and worshiped, and their pride about themselves and their native land. These stories tell how the gods of the nation did all sorts of magical things to show their favor, or to punish the people's sins; and how the great heroes of the tribe were befriended by their gods, and wonderful works done for them; and how the nation's gods proved themselves stronger than the gods of all other nations and gave victories in war by their magical help. The people believed these stories and delighted in them, just as children, who are simple, ignorant, full of imagination, like primitive nations, enjoy their fairy books. The older the stories become, the more the people reverence them. At last the stories get written down and gathered in a book,

total unconsciousness of his family that any wonders or glories surrounded Jesus, Luke ii, 48-50, Mt. xiii, 53-58, and his friends' conclusion that he must be insane, Mt. iii, 19-21: Compare Luke ii, 8-20, which certainly would have been noised abroad widely, and especially at Jerusalem, distant from Bethlehem only a three hours' journey, and the presentation in the Temple at Jerusalem, and the ecstatic declarations of Simeon and Anna, Luke ii, 22-38, with Mt. ii, 1-12, where it appears that the events told in Luke were totally unknown in Jerusalem: Compare Mt. ii, 13-21, the flight and sojourn in Egypt, with Luke ii, 39, where it is said that they returned at once to Nazareth.

* For example, bits of Genesis, Exodus, Judges, Samuel, about 1,000 years B. C.; bits of Exodus, Deuteronomy, Numbers, Proverbs, and several Prophets, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, from 700 to 800 years B. C.; Malachi, Job, many Psalms and Proverbs, Ruth, Jonah, parts of Leviticus and Numbers, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, early forms of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, about 400 to 500 B. C.; later form of Pentateuch and Joshua, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, about 250 B. C. See Chronology at end of Vol. III, "Bible for Learners."

and then the people reverence the book, thinking it records the dealing of the divine power with their nation; and they go to it for their religion. Now, just such stories as these, which we find in the history of all peoples, we find in the history of the Jews also, and in the Bible which contains that history. Indeed, it is quite full of them. We read almost on every page that Yahweh (which was their name for God) was fighting in the battles of the Jews, that he routed their foes for them, confused the minds of their enemies, threw down the walls of cities, opened a way through seas and rivers, made the sun stand still that the Israelites might have a longer time to fight, and did a host of such-like wonders for his chosen people. Now, these things have shown us that the Bible, which is the history of the early and wild times of the Israelites and of their slow growth to a better state, has the same traits as the histories of other nations in their early stages and slow growth; which must be so, because mankind are the same everywhere and grow in the same way and show the same qualities in the same stages of their growth, just as children show like traits at like times from infancy to maturity. Therefore, we have to treat all these early histories alike. If we believe not the magical wonders told in other early records, then we cannot believe those of the Bible, because plainly they are all of the same kind, spring up in the same way and in the same stages of a people's growth, and show a great likeness to each other wherever they are found.

But, besides all this, we have to remember that in the far-off times when the Bible and such-like early histories grew up, men knew very little about nature. They could give no account of a thunder storm, or of the rain, or hail, or wind, nor could they tell why rivers should rise at one time and fall at another. They thought the earth was flat and was the center of all things. They could not explain day and night, and had no notion of the spaces between the stars. For the stars they thought to be like lamps fixed in a curved crystal wall and made to turn around the earth. Therefore, all early records, and the Bible among them, have many errors springing from ignorance of the facts of nature, like the story of the creation in the Bible, according to which this great earth and the still vaster stars were

all made in six days; or like the story of the deluge, wherein it is told that the whole earth was flooded mountain-high by means of rain. As the people knew not the true facts, many different explanations would be likely to arise—which, indeed, did happen. There are even two different accounts of the creation, as you may see by reading carefully the first book of the Bible.*

Thus, as I have said, because we have found things in the Bible which our science now shows to be errors; because we find many places in it which agree not together but tell the same thing in very different ways; because mingled with grand and beautiful thoughts there are many things which are bad and ugly, having sprung from the wildness and fierceness of ancient and primitive times; because the different portions of the Bible bear different dates, and are not all the same in spirit and thought, but vary with the times they spring from; and because the pages are full of those same magical and strange stories which we find in all other early histories,—a change has come over our way of looking at the Bible. We call it not now as much as we did, and very many persons not at all, the word of God given to us to teach us the religion we ought to have; but a history, made by man, first passed by mouth from one to another for a long time, afterward written down, telling the thoughts, religious feelings, superstitions and deeds of the Jewish people during their slow growth from half-savage tribes loosely gathered and wandering together in a desert, to a united nation, to a higher religion and to a milder social condition.

Now, this change in the view of the Bible seems to some persons to be giving up everything, even religion itself. They resist it as long as they can. They cling to the old way in which they were taught, of believing everything in the Scripture simply because it is there. They wish to continue think-

*The first narrative of creation is in Genesis i, 1, to ii, 3. This is a lofty, grand, noble poem, sublime in its conceptions. The second narrative is in Genesis ii, 4-25. This is inferior, even puerile. The two agree as little in details as they do in spirit and elevation. For example, in the first narrative, all the lower creatures are created first, and then man is created, male and female at once; but in the second narrative, a man is created first, then the lower creatures, which are brought to the man to be named, and after this a woman is made of a rib taken from the man while he is asleep. To move from the i to the ii chapter of Genesis is to step suddenly into a totally different and lower world of imagination, sentiment and thought.

ing the Bible the proof of the providence and being of God and of all the truths of religion. Indeed they have thought it so for so long a time that they cannot think there is any other ground of religion. Slowly such persons are forced to yield to the facts. If they be wilfully ignorant, shutting eyes and ears, they may keep on thinking as their grandfathers did before the facts came to light. But such belief will not merit the name of faith or of conviction; for it will be either without knowledge or afraid of knowledge. But if they be intelligent and willing to learn, then, I say, slowly their minds will yield to the plain facts. They will see that the Bible is not a perfect guide; above all, that it is not the word of God sent to teach a lost and degraded world religious things which it never would learn otherwise; but that simply it is the literature and history of a race which had a wonderful career and was endowed with a deep religious fervor. Now, when such persons learn these facts and are forced to see them, after resisting them as long as they can, often they are smitten with despair. They feel alone in the world. The sense of a kind of heavenly company and oversight of earthly things, great instances of which the Bible has assured them of, has gone. Their ground of trust or belief has been broken, perhaps rudely. They say, "Well, the Bible has been taken away, and I see nothing left. All is uncertainty and dispute, and I find nothing to rest in, and no ground for religion."

Now, is not this what we must expect if we build a house on a bad foundation? A bad foundation is one that is not strong enough to hold the weight of the house, and gives way. But when the foundation crumbles and the house falls, it is not the fault of the house. The house may be good and fit to live in. The fault is in the unsafe and weak base we have placed it on. Suppose a temple to be built on a hill of sand, and the hill to stand as long as all is quiet. The beautiful towers and spires rise into the sky and make men's hearts glad, pointing to hope, trust, and power. Many generations meet together in the temple, and the older it grows, the dearer and more sacred it becomes. Its very walls seem holy thoughts. Its organ peal is the sound of the prayers of five hundred years. And meantime all has been peace. But one day, when the

grand and beautiful building is trembling as usual with the organ, the people kneeling, comes a great wind sweeping down from the same sky that so long has given its light to the temple. The sand is whirled into the air. The hill is torn to pieces. The temple falls on the people, while the sun is blotted out awhile by the flying clouds of sand and of fragments of the ruin. Is it the fault of the temple? or of the worship of the people who were praying therein? Does the fall prove these things bad or false? No; only that they were set on a weak place unable to hold their weight when a strain came. This is indeed the same figure chosen by Jesus to teach the Jews the same lesson. He had been telling them they were building their religion on books and forms and priests, whereas they ought to build it on their own souls; and then he added, "With this bad foundation, your religion will stand for a time while the sky is quiet; but what will you do when storms come? Then your religion will be like a house built on sand, and will fall. But the religion built on your own souls, which I am telling you of, will be like a house built on a rock and will stand." So, if you build religion on the Bible as a message of God to mankind, made by Him all true and perfect for that purpose, by and by the winds arise and the floods come; I mean knowledge, science and history. They come breaking in. They sweep away all false claims and make you see the Bible as it is, simply a human history of the growth of a race and of its religion, and bearing all the marks of other ancient records. Then it may be very true, indeed, that the religion which you have built on the Bible as a miracle of God, will fall to ruin when that foundation, which I may liken to a hill of sand, is torn away by the blasts of knowledge; but it is not the fault of religion, but of the weak and unsafe ground which you have made it rest on in your minds. And as, if a house fall to ruin (and think of this, I pray you) because it is ill-placed, on crumbling soil, not architecture or house-building, or the fitness of dwelling in a house, is overthrown, but only that one house, because it was ill-placed, so, if your religion fall to pieces when you are made to see the Bible as it is, not religion is overturned, but only *your* religion, which you have built upon a heap of sand.

What, then, shall we do if our house have fallen on us because the bad foundation we built it on has crumbled. Will it be wise to sit on the bare ground, unsheltered, despairing, either sullen or whimpering, saying that houses are delusions, that no one can build a house able to stand, that nothing is left but to stretch ourselves on the cold sod and take whatever the bleak skies shower on us? In order to know that this is foolish, need you anything more than to look about you? For you will see houses on all sides in which people live safely and happily, which not even have been shaken by the wind that overthrew your dwelling; not because the inmates knew not of the gale, or because it passed them by, for they heard its roaring clearly, but because they had fixed their houses on a solid place. You will find many persons who have a religion in them which out-rides all the tempests of life, not only the blasts of knowledge and science, but the more furious storms of feeling, passion, pain. Very great persons of the earth you will see these to be, nobly intelligent, searching in mind, candid and truth-loving in spirit, sublime in act; and they think not religion is overthrown or has failed. They live under its roof, which is as steady as the sky for shelter, as glorious for sublimity, as starry for joy. They will tell you—these simple yet great folk, whom you may find about you plentifully, and also in ages past bearing great names, persons like Jesus, Socrates, Huss, Paul, Fenelon, Parker, and many more such-like—they will tell you that religion is not shaken by anything when it is founded on the human soul; that if it be built on a book, a church, on traditions in any shape, it can have no more steadiness than these things on which it stands have, which are changeable things, shifting and even falling to pieces in the lapse of time or by the growth of knowledge; but that if religion rests wholly in the nature of man, it *must* have all the lastingness and power which the natural unfolding of human nature has, and nothing *can* have any more. It is true that men's thoughts of religion change from age to age. This must be so. For, however religion be sought and fixed in the soul, the mind cannot see all the truth about it at once, nay, it must go on learning forever how to think justly of religion and to travel its infinite regions. But this overturns nothing, because religion is not the same as this or that thought

of religion, but something that lives in the act of thinking and in the adoration of the truth as a living power. These changes of thoughts may alter religion, but not destroy the foundation of it; and if they be growth in knowledge, they may make the base stronger, as if a foundation of hard wood were changed into stone, and that again into pure gold, while the house stands.

If, therefore, we see so many of the wise and good of our own times and of all ages, having a religion which is not shaken by anything, will it not be wise to think long before we say there is no religion and naught for a basis of religion, only because our own foundation has proved frail and crumbling? If one foundation has failed, as if it were a sand-heap on the surface, shall we not be wise to dig deeply after another one, thus to find the firm rock? For, if so many wise and great persons cherish religion, and it seem in them not only good, fruitful, but lasting, immovable, surely it were foolish for us to toss it away like a bauble full of flaws. At any rate, let us think long, well, reverently.

Now, if we think, we shall ask this question: Having "given up the Bible" in this manner, (our opponent's charge, but unjust), what have we left? But this is a hard question to answer in a little space, not because so little is left, but so much. If it must be answered in a word, the answer is, EVERYTHING.

Imagine a man placed in very happy conditions in life. He has riches, and whatever riches can buy. He has beside, plentifully, the things riches cannot buy. His home is cheerful. His house is in a pleasing, healthful, beautiful place, having many trees about it, garden walks, flower-beds, fruit-vines and shrubs, generous orchards, a spring of sweet water, and a fine view of distant blue hills and ruddy valleys. His home rings with children and is filled with love. In a fine crystal case in the best room he has a huge spike like gold, by which he sets much store. All the family admire and praise it. Often they gather about that golden bar to wonder at its lustre, weight, value and beauty. But one day comes a stranger to the house; being shown the treasure of the family, he says, "The spike is not gold; it only looks like gold," and drawing a little vial of acid from his pouch, he touches the gleaming bar, and lo! a deadly gas arises and a stain remains which proves it to be false

metal; for nothing so could affect pure gold. Then if the man and his family should weep and wail in despair and ask, "What have we left?" it would be hard to answer such a question because of the many great things that would be left. If they should ask, "What have we lost?" it were easy to answer, for it were but one thing, and that the least of their possessions. But if the question be, What have we remaining? it will take a long time to count the things left and much longer still to show and describe their values and how far they are above the false spike which has been taken away by the stranger's knowledge. In truth, we must say to the owner, "You have **EVERYTHING** left! All that ever truly you had, is still yours. For only you *seemed* to have a spike of gold when in truth it was not gold." So, if any ask, Having given up the Bible, as the phrase goes, what is left? either we must count all the great, good and deep things of life, which have such vast meanings, or we must say in a word, **EVERYTHING!** and we must add, "We have all that ever we had; for we only *seemed* to have a miraculous book set up in our house to be held in awe because miraculous, but in truth it was a simple human history; a book like all others of its kind, but we knew not its true nature."

But I say, although a stranger with his knowledge has shown us the truth about our book, taken away our mistake about it, made it come down from its crystal seat, we have **EVERYTHING** left; for, never truly we had any more than now, but only *seemed* to have more by ascribing a false worth to something. I will gather into two points the things which we have left—**EVERYTHING!**

First, we have the Bible left. This may seem strange and bold. But ask yourselves what you really mean by giving up the Bible. You will see then that this is a wrong thing to say. For in truth you mean only that certain things in the Bible have been taken away; that the idea that the book is a miraculous revelation from God has been corrected in your minds; that some stories, precepts and thoughts have been shown not to be true, nor divine, but to be only the pride, patriotism, religion, superstition, of the Hebrew people; that these are things not belonging to the heart of human nature and to the heavenly truth, but to the feelings, prejudices, customs and ideas of a

far-off time in the growth of one race, and that these have been taken from a false light in which we had put them and from a place they deserved not, and set in their true light and place. But all the grand things in the Bible, that eternally are true and as wide as humanity, remain to us, nor are taken away, nor could be. The figure of Moses is a colossal one. The story of Joseph is as tender as ever it was. The poems of Genesis are as pleasant to the imagination. We have still, and forever, the mighty warnings or joyful comfortings of Isaiah and the other prophets, the grand poem of Job, the deep religious love and worship of the Psalms. Jesus walks still in Galilee, glorious, beautiful, heavenly, heroic, and all the grandeur and loveliness of His spirit, which so calls out the soul, remains untouched. Stephen still defies his judges with the truth and looks up to heaven, dying. Paul is the same strong, wide-minded, free, devoted, fearless spirit who preached that God had made all nations of one blood, and that forms are bad and barbarous if they keep men apart from each other. These remain. These are the grand and life-giving things in the Bible. They cannot be moved.

Finally, we have ourselves and the Universe left, our own souls and God. This is the one source of religion, full, inexhaustible. All other things are helps. The soul's sight of divinity encompassing it, is the one perfect and immovable ground of religious life. For comfort, for help, for hope, faith, trust, for depth of moral convictions, for understanding of life, we need only the soul and God. The beholding of other souls is great and life-giving; we drink in their beauty, loftiness, sacrifices, glory. But we return into our own soul, as the holy place wherein we can hear God speak for ourselves. This we can hear, for it is our nature to know and perceive the infinite beauty and holiness in which "we live and move and have being." God never was in any time more than in this time; nor nearer to any soul than he is to our own souls; nor more speaking and telling his commands and his being in any hearts than now in our own. This is the only authority. This is the one source of religious knowledge. This is the rock on which worship builds its shrines of everlastingness. This is the source to which went the great prophets and singers of the Bi-

ble. We hear of it in the Psalms. Isaiah, Jesus, Paul, say it is the source of life and knowledge. What was the source and ground of religion for Jesus is the same for us, and the one that rests on a rock. We need no more. Therefore, we find we have no more, nor can have. Religion is not a sum of things put into us by a time past, or by a record of God's doing and speaking in other places; but a life that rises within us and comes out of us skyward, like flame, seeking its source. It is natural, sure, steadfast, being in the relation of the soul to God, of our life, love and thought to their Infinite and Eternal Source. Religion needs no more. For naught can be so close to us and so deep in us as our Infinite Source, the Being of our being. This is our nature; this is also life and religion, from which the Bible itself rolled forth.

'The word unto the prophet spoken
Was writ on tables yet unbroken;
Still floats upon the morning wind,
Still whispers to the willing mind;
One accent of the Holy Ghost,
The heedless world has never lost.'

To this point now we have come:

1. That the Bible is a human history and literature, containing the story of the Hebrew race and the course of the growth of the Hebrew religion.

2. That this Hebrew literature is marked by the traits of all ancient histories and literature.

3. That very prominent among these traits is ignorance of Nature's laws, and marvelous magical stories springing from this ignorance.

4. That thus many old views of the Bible have passed away; but that all the pure religious beauty, the lofty psalms, the moral grandeurs of that great Book remain undisturbed, and are everlasting.

Here we may turn to look at the Bible and religion in another manner, and may do so by means of this question, "Which of them depends on the other?" For it is not to be doubted that the Bible is a book of religion. It holds a wonderful religious literature, always severe and earnest, often lofty and glorious. Since then, it is a religious book, not a scientific, philosophical or merely literary work, not a history merely, but both a religious history and a book of devotion and of prayer, plainly either religion must have come forth from the Bible, or the Bible from religion. This is a great difference and lies at the root of the matter. It is a question of the very nature of religion—whether it be natural, and grow up out of the human soul, or whether it be supernatural and be put into the soul. One view, the old view of the Bible about which I am speaking, is that great religious truths shine not in us by the light of nature but must be put into us by divine power; that the Bible is the Word given for that purpose; that by it alone we learn truly His providence and nature, faith in this life and hope of the hereafter; and that but for this light of revelation in the Bible we should be in darkness as to all the ways of God with men and the things which he has in store for us. The other view is that religion is natural and necessary to man's nature, and rises in us as love, thought, memory, self-consciousness do; that it grows up from within by the action on us of the glories and terrors of the earth and sky, of the infinity of space, of the unendingness of time, and of the power of the moral law; that it begins in low states and grows purer and higher with time; that it clothes itself in many forms, in institutions, rites, books, and that it is able to make such impress of itself as the Bible is; that thus the Bible has sprung from human sentiment of religion, and bears witness to the power and sublimity of this fact of human nature, and rests on it.

Between these two views there is no middle ground. Granting that the Biblical books are Scriptures of religion, then either religion came forth from the Bible or the Bible sprang from religion.

Now, if the former be true, if religion came from the Bible and begin for us in its pages, then of course any disturbance of that book disturbs religion. For then to move the Bible, even

a little, is to shake the whole fabric of religion, which springs from it. If religion begin in the Scripture, if without that book we should have no religion beyond a few feeble and doubtful gropings of the unaided mind, then it is very true that whatever aims to set aside the miraculous parts of the Scriptures and to place the Bible on the plane of human life and of nature's order, threatens religion itself, if not its very existence, yet its influence and authority. But if religion begin not in the Bible, nor spring from it, but on the contrary, if the Bible have come from religion and be one of the many forms in which human worship and religious feeling has clothed itself, then it is plain that religion is not moved at all by any change in our view of the Bible or by any new knowledge of it that can be gotten; for religion being the source, and the Bible but one of the streams that has flowed from it, the source is not affected by anything that betides the river below. We may make any discoveries or gather any knowledge whatsoever about the Scripture; religion stands unmoved the same; for the Bible is not the origin of religion but religion is the origin of the Bible.

If we study the stream that flows from a mountain spring or from a lake far up the heights fed by the perpetual snows of the peak, we may learn something about the highland source of the river. We may analyse the river water, and after finding in that way what it holds dissolved in it, how much lime, or salt, or magnesia, or iron, or carbon, and other things, we may say, "These, then, are also in the source of the river; the water of the mountain basin holds these things also." But soon, perhaps, by exploring more, we find another stream emptying into the river above the place where we tested the water; and this stream comes not from the mountain source, but from some rills and brooks that traverse a stretch of woodland only a little elevated. Soon we learn that some of the things in the river-water below, come from this stream and are not in the river above the mouth of the little tributary. Thus we may correct our view of what the waters of the high upland source contain, by learning what is added by the little streams that flow in along the river's course. But whatever we may learn or infer about the kind of water in the snow-fed lake of the hills, that basin is not moved

away by any changes in our knowledge of the river and of its tributaries below. However long and much our knowledge of its waters may vary, the great river that flows from it shows it to be there. So it is with the Bible and religion, when we see clearly that religion is the source and the Scriptures the river. By study of the Bible, the river, we may learn much of the nature of religion, the source. By care and pains to find out what has gotten into the Bible from other streams of historic influence, from the traits of a race or of several races, from prejudices, passions, patriotism, ancient ignorance, from the fervent imagination of people in their childhood, from the mode of keeping and of handing down books in old times, we may draw nearer and nearer to knowing the true essence of religion, the source of the main stream. But whatever we may learn about the Bible, and thence infer about the place, nature and growth of religion in human history, we are not overthrowing the fact of religion itself, since religion is the very origin of the Bible which we study, and, indeed, of many other great Scriptures beside. Therefore, I say, that if religion come out of the Bible, and rest on it, then it will be at the mercy of whatever affects the place and power of that book; but if the Bible have sprung from religion and rest on it, then religion is the chief and first, and stays unmoved whatever may happen to the book.

Let us see, then, what are some of the reasons why it is true that religion rests not on the Bible, but the Bible on religion.

First, religion is older than the Bible, very much older. Before even the Hebrews began to write down their history, even long before they had collected much which they passed from mouth to mouth for many generations before writing it, they had a religion, which also their fathers had, going away back to their seats in the hills of Armenia. And long before we begin to walk on historic ground in the Hebrew history, with Moses and the Egyptian captivity, religion had lived some thousands of years in Egypt. We cannot get back to its beginning. The traces of the religion of the forefathers of the Hebrews, their fearful and austere deities, germane to a race living in a country of hills and hard soil, are plentiful in the

Bible. But the trace of the first human worship is lost in an antiquity compared to which Moses is a modern hero. How, then, can religion rest on the Bible if religion was before the Bible? How can religion flow from the Scripture if religion came first? Plainly, the Bible, which came after, owes its religious part to the religion which went before, which was the half-blind, but also the half-seeing and altogether sublime, struggle upward of the human soul.

Secondly. There have been many nations and races on the earth that never knew of the Bible, both before there was any Bible and since. Yet these had their religion, and even large, often grand, Scriptures of their own. The Egyptians, the Chinese, the Hindoos, the Persians, the Greeks and Romans, the Norse tribes,—all had their religion, their hymns or Scriptures, their worship and rites, some of them very noble and grand. Yet none knew of the Bible. How, then, can religion depend on the Bible and spring from it, when there are many religions, and grand religious Scriptures and devout hymns, among people who never knew of the Bible, and if they had heard of it, would not have thought it so great as their own old Scriptures? Plainly the books of the Bible, which are the Scriptures of only one ancient race, can not be the source of religion, since religion has inspired many other Scriptures in other races; but religion is the source of the Bible as well as of other old religious Scriptures, and is one and the same origin of devotion in all lands and times.

Thirdly. "The sympathy of religions" shows their common origin in human nature. They agree together. They say the same things, utter the same hopes, fears, faiths, struggles, because they all belong to the same human nature. The grander and loftier the things are of which they speak, the more the religions are like each other, because then they are busy with the universal and the eternal. There is a common sense to be met in all the great seers and prophets of whatever times or people. What the trusty steadiness of matter is to Aristotle, Franklin, Napoleon, to be counted on with certainty, that the higher law is to Confucius, Socrates, Paul. What plant-life, animal-life and human society, are to Æsop, Shakespeare, Cervantes, that the spiritual life is to Buddha, Isaiah, John, Jesus.

All these teachers and others such-like, are sure to show this common sense and to say the same things of the eternal and unseen in morals and in Being. The greater they are, the more they are alike, because then they have less of the accidents of time and place and more of the common humanity. Pick out from the sayings of any high seer, Jesus, or any other, the best and highest things he has said, and you will find he gives not anything new to the world, but bears new witness to great truths already old. Every seer finds the earth long full of glories, of visions, raptures, knowledge, faith. He can only point to them once more, add nothing to them but his adoration. No matter how strange, quaint, bygone, half-barbarous are the imagery and legends. Pierce to the few grand thoughts thus clothed. You will feel the beating of the one heart, both human and divine. Jesus taught the nature of God's fatherhood in the exquisite story of the Prodigal; but the psalmist long before had spoken of Him as One who pities us "like as a father pities his children;" and an ancient Hindu cries, "Lord, heaven and earth take refuge with thee as a child with its mother." The same simple-great thoughts look forth everywhere, thoughts of God, of the Unseen, of the Eternal, of Right and Wrong, of Truth, Love, Forgiveness, Holiness, Immortality. Thus religions are at one, because they have one source, namely, the human soul, which is the image, witness and abode of the Eternal Life, and everywhere one in Him. Plainly therefore, if all religions have this common nature because they all arise in the human soul, then they have not their source in any Scriptures said to come from Heaven, but the Scriptures have their source in the religion which lives in mankind, the witness of the human soul to the Infinite and Eternal. The Bible is but an expression or outflow of that religion which is before it and before all Scriptures, the source of all powers, of all hopes, all prayers.

Fourthly. The great prophets themselves say that religion is chief and first in the human heart, and in authority above all the written word. This was the constant stress of Jesus,— "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" in-somuch that it was noticed and spoken of that he based not himself on the elders, traditions, writings, but spoke on his

own account, so that they were surprised at him because, "he spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Very well might they say, "Never man spake as he spake;" for any one will startle the world in an instant who will speak wholly from his own soul, throwing to the winds all priests, principalities and powers. This was because Jesus withdrew from the tyranny of the ill-used Bible to the native religion within him, the source of all the grandeur and power which the Scriptures had, the origin not only of their due authority (due to their beauty and sublimity) but of authority itself. It was the same with Socrates. He was accused of setting at naught the common idea of religion. The like befell Paul. He preached a righteousness of faith, that is an inward light and judgment, as being far above all righteousness of the law, that is, servile obedience to the letter of the ceremonies as if religion were founded thereon. He said, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind," and "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God," and, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord is Lord over all, and is rich unto all that call upon him."

Thus these four reasons I have given for holding that religion comes not out of the Bible; but that it is first and the Bible comes forth from it: 1. That religion is older than the Bible, and that the elder can not spring from the younger, but the Bible which came after is an expression of the natural religion which was before it: 2. That there are many religions which never knew the Bible, but made Scriptures of their own whence plainly the Bible and all other Scriptures are alike in springing from religion, which thus blooms into holy books and other forms: 3. That the sympathy or likeness of religions, especially in their noblest and highest thoughts, shows that they have all one common source, which is the natural religion of the soul, from which all Scriptures and other forms and expressions thereof, have come forth: 4. That the great prophets, even those enshrined in the Scriptures themselves, always withdraw from the letter to seek the light of the spirit and proclaim its authority.

Whence, again I say, as the Scriptures come forth from religion and not religion from the Scriptures, religion is not

overthrown, nor in any wise shaken, by our critical views of the Bible as a historical expression of religion, nor by our discoveries of the influences which have affected the Book during its many ages of human transmission.

And now I think I hear a voice, perhaps the united voices of many persons, saying to me, "What then is the religion of the soul which you say was before the Bible? We can understand what the Book tells us, that God did many and great miracles to show himself to the Hebrews and that he sent his son and word, Jesus, the greatest miracle of all, to teach men Christianity. But if this be not true, and is only the form in which religion clothed itself in early times and among ignorant peoples, then what is the elder and natural religion? Whence comes it? How is it to be known? and, What does it proclaim? Tell us this."

Ah! if any ask me this, be it known to you that it is a great question, the question of questions; not because it is difficult to answer, as it seems to me, but because it is so grand and so far-reaching. It lays hold of our sense of life, of all our deepest feelings, of the mind's soaring necessity to seek knowledge, of the power of the moral consciousness, of the experience of peace. It is a transcendent theme in itself, which, if there be strength I will strive to follow sometime and will ask you to strive with me up that shining mountain path in the everlasting hills. Meantime I will answer thus—Religion springs in the human soul because of the house the soul lives in. I mean not the body; which I might better call the garment of that mysterious intelligence. I mean the home in which the thinking, feeling, willing, struggling heart and mind finds itself cast to live. Now, if a child grow up in a vile and wretched home, filthy, cruel, base, painful, where no love nor peace ever shine, you will not wonder if the child grow up hardened and depraved till all tenderness and sweetness be gone, and only an ugly, horrible, misshapen Caliban of strength survive. But if the child be cast into a blissful home, clean, sweet, gentle, generous, where love and peace abound, then you wonder not that these same qualities grow large and beautiful with the child's growth, and make a being able to extract life's sweetness and to give to others. So it is with the soul of man,

in which religion grows by reason of the house or home it lives in, because the great and mighty things in that house can call forth the awe, love, praise of the soul, which lie in it waiting to be called, as much as love and gentleness and beauty lie in the child waiting for the home to nurse them. That house in which the soul lives is the INFINITE. The Infinite covers it like a roof. Wherever the eye turns, the Infinite appears. First, the eye gazes into space, and there is no end to be seen or thought. Worlds on worlds are climbing, as if each were some radiant, ambitious creature mounting on another's shoulder thus to scale heaven by a living ladder. But from the farthest star, so far that it might be blotted out and we should not know it for hundreds of years because the light at this moment leaving it takes all that time to reach our eyes, there still are skies as full of stars as our own, and no end and no beginning. Or does the soul turn its eye inward and look at its own being? It sees but a little way. Soon it kneels, faint or awe-struck, gazing into an abyss as dark, as bright, as deep, as close-encircling, as the vault of the skies. In this Infinitude the soul sees love, thoughts, desires, feelings, moving and shining like the stars, rising and setting in itself, past all understanding. What a house to live in! Then wakes the native worship of the soul! Then quickens its awe, praise and prayer! For this house in which it lives, the Infinite, draws it into its own likeness and fills it with its own nature, whereby it knows and adores the glory and beauty of its home, which is the glory of God.

A great French man of science, who has fame for minute and delicate investigations in physical science world-wide, yet has not had his eye closed thereby to the majesty of his soul's home—I mean Pasteur—says:

“What is beyond this starry vault? More starry skies. Well, and beyond that. The human mind driven by an invincible force will never cease asking what is beyond? * * * It is useless to answer? ‘Beyond are unlimited spaces, times, magnitudes.’ Nobody understands these words. He who proclaims the existence of an Infinite—and nobody can evade it—asserts more of the supernatural in that affirmation than exists in all the miracles of all religions; for the notion of the Infinite has the two-fold character of being irresistible and incomprehensible.

When this notion siezes on the mind, there is nothing left but to bend the knee. In that anxious moment all the springs of intellectual life threaten to snap, and one feels near being seized by the sublime madness of Pascal. * * * Everywhere I see the inevitable expression of the Infinite in the world. By it the supernatural is seen in the depths of every heart. The idea of God is a form of the idea of the Infinite. As long as the mystery of the Infinite weighs on the human mind, temples will be raised to the worship of the Infinite, whether God be Brahma, Allah or Jehovah; and on the floor of the temples you will see kneeling men absorbed in the idea of the Infinite. Metaphysics do but translate within us the paramount notion of the Infinite. The faculty which, in the presence of beauty, leads us to conceive of a superior beauty—is not that too the conception of a never realized ideal? What is science, what is the passion for comprehending anything, but the effect of the stimulus exercised on our mind by the mystery of the universe.”

Having come now to this point, that some things in the Bible, heretofore held sacred and important, must be given up, because they are not true, and yet religion is shaken in nowise, but is the same truth and power in the soul, it will be well to look more closely at *what* we give up when we conclude that the Bible is not a special revelation from God, and see, since religion is not disturbed, what the effect is on the Bible itself in our minds.

First. We must give up the miraculous element. We learn that the strange magical stories of the Scriptures are not narratives of real events, but myths and legends; that sometimes they spring wholly from an idea, being the forms which the idea took in the minds and literature of the people; that sometimes they are founded on some fact, but happened not and could not happen just as they are told. Thus, for example, we

can not believe any longer in the wonders of Samson's strength because we know no man unaided could kill a thousand men with an animal's jaw bone, and that if he had any such strength as that, it could not be lost simply because his hair was cut; and many persons think this is a pure myth, an expression of some of the people's ideas about the sun, having no historical fact under it. Thus, again, we can not believe that all the plagues of Egypt, the division of the Red Sea, and other wonders at the same time, took place as they are told; but these seem to have some foundation in fact. Legends gathered about a remarkable escape of the Hebrews from bondage in Egypt led by a great and strong hero. But whether the miracles be pure myths, enshrining an idea only, or legends, having some kinds of fact in them, the world is giving up the miraculous parts, having learned that such things never take place.

Secondly. We have given up all the local and temporary matter, the prejudices, notions, customs and thoughts of one race at different times in their history. We believe not any longer that these things are rules for us in our different stage of knowledge and altered ways of living. Thus, the laws of Moses about marriage, and many other things, we can not think to be laws commanded by the Most High, but only the ways in which the Hebrews of those early times looked at things. Indeed, Jesus plainly felt in this same way; for he refers to the old laws of an eye for an eye, and of loving one's friend and hating one's enemy, and of marriage, and says they are not good laws and he has better ones to give, the laws, namely, of forgiveness, and of returning good for evil, and of constancy.

Now the question is, What is the effect on our views of the Bible and our feelings toward it, of giving up these two elements as not divinely ordained? The effect is that the grand, beautiful things in the Bible shine all the brighter and stand forth all the greater for the taking away of the transient local things, and the magical things. For when we cease to look at the partial things, then things true and lovely everywhere at all times, appear more plainly and nobly. The same knowledge which shows us that the miraculous stories could not have happened and that the ideas and deeds of half wild and ignorant times can not be laws of God for us, also makes us see better

the meaning of the whole and the sublimity of the great and universal parts of Scripture which came from those deeps of the soul where all times and peoples are alike. It is great and thrilling to see that amid all the strange beliefs, rites, thoughts, feelings of barbarous people, thousands of years ago, the human heart beat, if not so delicately, yet as passionately, joyfully, painfully, as now, and that the soul was filled with awe as solemn as our own, though not so reasonable and enlightened.

To attend first to the miraculous element:

The fact on which to fix the eye is this, that the miraculous stories in the Bible simply are *the form* in which the people produced or embalmed their ideas or efforts. If we understand not this, we can not take another step forward. The early efforts of mankind, whether in thinking or doing, express themselves in this imaginative way. Marvelous story is the form taken by history, and the clothing worn by thought, in primitive times. Imagination then is vivid, feelings strong, religious sentiment active, the critical sense unawakened, writing unknown. Therefore the people mingle all their feelings and deeds with their religion and weave them together in stories which please their fancy and cling to their memory. No one invents them. They spring up like the fancies of children. They are repeated from mouth to mouth and cherished because they fit the mental condition of the people perfectly. Thus all history, all thought, all sentiment and religion, in very early times, find their way into the form of imaginative and magical stories. Now if we dwell on this form as itself the fact and having actually taken place, we shall miss the true substance of the fact which did occur, or of feeling and of thought which were active. If we occupy ourselves with this shell, prizing it for all, we shall be busy with the rigid form outside and shall not know the soft and tender life within. Suppose we were to take the imaginative talk of children for fact. They play that they are all manner of creatures and express their fancies in the most simple and literal way, exactly as primitive races do. They are so simple that for the time being they actually are to their own feelings, steamboats, locomotives, horses, lions, tigers, and all sorts of quaint things, "and every variety of furriner," as Dan'l Pegotty said; and will talk to invisible objects and to creatures of their own

fancy as pleasantly and earnestly as to each other. Suppose, now, when we see a group of children neighing, prancing, roaring and puffing, like horses, wild animals and engines, or talking volubly to chairs and tables, or to invisible things, and pretending to receive answers, we fall to reasoning how they can have been changed so as to make sounds like animals, or how it happens that wood and stone can hear and answer them while we perceive no voice from these objects, or how children can have companions invisible to us,—we shall be very foolish; and thus in fastening on the mere form in which the child-nature utters itself, and in treating this form as literal fact, we shall fail altogether to understand the child nature itself bubbling up in these fancies. Children are running over with the most daring poetical images, such as that the stars are angels' eyes, or the fire-sprinkled skies the under side of heavenly carpets. Suppose we should straddle, like a rustic, over a garden path on which a child had uttered some such courageous thought and with gaping mouth and eyes strained open we should look for the angelic forms owning those starry eyes, or wonder how the gleaming skies could be a carpet and what the upper side might be like; we should get no fact for our pains, and we should miss the blooming fact of childhood's rich fancy. Yet in just this foolish way we have treated the old legends which are the fancies of the childhood of the race; whereby we cheat ourselves with unreal and ghost-like visions, and fail to see the workings of nature. This distinction between form and matter underlies all art, poetry, everything that adds beauty to life. The form *must* be limited, made in some fashion by man, because it is man's way of expressing the facts of life which man made not. "We must take some things for granted;" else all poetry becomes impossible, all pictures deceits; for in actual fact neither do men speak in rhyme and metre, nor exist in miniature on a canvass. Suppose we take the painting on the canvas for literal fact in itself; we shall be occupied with the curious lilliputian creatures we shall think the figures are, and be measuring the inches of them, missing utterly the meaning of the artist, the human passions, or the loveliness of the earth's face, which do actually exist in life and in nature. Yet this would be no more foolish than to take the old religious legends

of humanity for actual facts, when they are only the simple and child-like forms expressing the hopes, fears, loves, faiths, worships and struggles of humanity, which are real and living facts.

Now, when we have given up these tales, when we see they never could happen just as they are told, when knowledge shows us that these quaint stories are not miracles and magical feats but only rhyme, metre, colors containing a far higher order of facts, the facts of the human soul in its struggles, then the effect of dropping the stories as facts is to fasten the eye on the true facts; so that the efforts, throes, triumphs of the heart of man come out to view in their pathos and glory. Thus if we read the many wonders of healing recorded of Jesus, by which were cured all manner of sick people, lame men, lepers, paralytics, demoniacs, blind and dumb, lunatics, those afflicted with dropsy and hemorrhage, and others, and even the dead, these being raised to life,—and if we take all things as true facts just as they are told, and as miracles, we soon lose sight of Jesus, and stand in a dull wonder before these stories. We might even be like the Jews, who are said to have felt no respect for the facts because they thought Jesus had made a bargain with the king of the devils and by this aid did the cures. Whatever we call the power, if we take the stories as magical or miraculous facts, whether the magic be of heaven or of hell, Jesus, the man, vanishes in a shadowy conjuror whom we barely see in the clouds of spells and witchery, because we are so occupied with the amazing marvels. But if we see these stories to be only forms in which the fervent heart of the time expressed the majesty and personal power of Jesus, then we begin to think of *him*. We study the incidents to see what manner of man he was around whom such forms of expression grew up, and how he appeared to the men who, in a childlikeness of ignorance and mental habits, imagined that his presence and touch did such great works. Then his grace, benignity, beauty and force begin to shine. Or if we read how Jesus rose up in a boat and stilled a storm by a word, and think it happened just as it is told and was a miracle, we shall be as much at a loss about Jesus as the disciples were, who were afraid and said, “What manner of man is this that even the winds and waves obey him?” But

if we know that this story is only a primitive form of expression, and that the true matter and fact in it is the impression made by Jesus on his companions, then we begin to have knowledge of a great, serene and glorious man, and not of a mysterious wonder-worker.

What, then, shall we say is the effect of giving up the miracles of the Bible? The effect is that these things which once we thought to be facts and true events we see now to be the form in which quite other and wider facts are expressed; and seeing this, we need give only so much notice to the form as is required to bring the substance to full view. We can fix our eyes on the true and valuable facts which the form enshrines, and know them better. Thus to give up the miraculous events of the Bible is to bring the real truths of it into clearer view, so that the great Book at once seems greater still, full of new beauty and sublimity, because no longer we mistake the form for the fact, but look at the real and true facts themselves.

But there is another effect of giving up the supernatural in the Bible even greater than that already spoken of, bringing the Bible even into a more grand relief. The miraculous or magical element is not only a mere *form of expression*, but it is a *primitive and barbarous form*. Therefore, when it is held not only for form but for fact and the magical stories are thought really to have happened, we are in a very low grade of belief, which does more than anything to hide the true sublimity of Nature and of History. For the sublimity of Nature is Order, and the grandeur of historical development is Order. But miracles come trooping in on every page of the Scripture like clamorous children into high company, interrupting but not adding anything. The creation we are told was done by a series of divine biddings issued over chaos as a general commands his troops; then by many special acts of power the unfolding goes on until men become both numerous and wicked; whereat it repents the Creator that he made man at all, and thereon he sends a flood which drowns all the people but one family; afterwards mankind grow again too proud and bold, and the Lord comes down to confound their speech, making many languages instead of one, so that the people no longer understand each other, and wander away by hordes over the earth; then when finally the

Jews are collected and ill-treated in Egypt, they are set free by all manner of astonishing miracles done for them, and led by Moses to the verge of the promised land; there the Lord becomes offended with them and turns them back to wander for forty years up and down a sandy waste till all of that generation have died; then by many other miracles they are brought into Canaan and made to conquer it, while the Lord helps them by drying up rivers, knocking down the walls of cities, making the sun stand still, and confounding the minds of their enemies. Now if we look at all this as form, we shall find many noble poems in it, like the opening chapters of the Bible. But if we take it for fact, there is no grace in it. It is disorder, revision, repentance, petty planning, wavering will. It is no better to the mind and some of it no grander to the imagination than those extraordinary pictures of eastern life, the Arabian Nights. There is nothing magnificent or divine in cursing a country with vermin and reptiles, defiling the wells and killing the first-born of every creature, by way of rescuing chosen people from bondage. As long as the mind dwells on such things as facts, it so will be dazzled by them that it will not see the things which make the true worth of the great Book. Men so might light up the skies with fire-works as to hide all the stars, the flames and fumes of human doings obscuring the everlasting lights. Thus miracles hide the order of nature which reigns in humanity and in history. The mind by dwelling on these flashes which gleam close to the eyes, loses power to see the sober and serene motions of nature's works which go on beyond. And this is what happens with regard to the Bible; for men so have been blinded to its pure and peculiar beauties and true greatness by dwelling on these magical tales, that very many persons even think the whole value of the great book rests on these stories. If we believe not these, they say, we throw the whole Bible away. Is it not a sad thing so to be blinded by these forms in which anciently men have tried to express themselves, as not to see the universal facts of soul which they strove to express, or even the divine and touching fact of the out-singing expression itself, the struggle to utter the facts of life? Yet this is what happens when one thinks the Bible and its worth all to be gone if the miracles be taken away. But, in truth, it is

just then that we can see religion in its own simple nature, and the Bible coming forth from the religion of the human soul. We see these things in their pure simplicity as parts of nature, like the flowers that grow on the earth. "Does God," says Weiss "present himself to our intelligent cognitions as a mere performer of inscrutable things? Then the feeling which I have at smooth feats of Heller and Hermann is religion. Would it not be a pitiful idea to make mysteriousness the exciting cause of human faith? What is more palpable, immediate and familiar than our sense of right or wrong? Yet how we love and adore the cause of this simplicity!"

To gain the use of anything we must know it as it is. For no tool will serve us if we handle it not according to its own nature, but like some other tool which it is not. Nay, more than this,—all that we need for admiration, love, worship, quickening of the soul, is to see things as they are. The more we look at the world, at the past, at mankind, at the present, letting go our prejudices and getting knowledge in place of ignorance, we shall see the more of beauty and grandeur. Knowledge opens the gate of wonder, admiration, awe. There was a time, as even in the Bible we see, when all nature seemed to men alive with spirits, who moved it. Wonderful and delicate creatures lived in trees, in the waters, in the hills and clouds, and made these things move, bloom and open as they do. The sun and moon were living beings, and angels trundled the stars. Knowledge removed all these agents. Have many souls feared to lose all majesty, mystery and beauty in a cold and lifeless level? Have they thought the world of feeling, of passion, of imagination in which early men lived, was dead? But knowledge has only enlarged admiration and dignified emotion. Is not the new thought of a vast unfolding of life something grander than the manufacture of a world? "Suppose," exclaims a philosopher, "we were this instant to lose our knowledge that the earth is a ball, swinging in space, one of a troop of worlds more numerous than the sands on the sea shore, but arranged in systems moving in harmony, instinct with perfect law; and that we were left to think with men a few centuries ago, that the earth is a flat space of uncertain extent, without fellowship in the universe, that the stars are candles and the

sun a moderate ball of fire, going so near the earth, as even Lord Bacon thought, as to burn the snow off the higher mountain tops. Sweep away from us I say this moving, magnificent spectacle of order; sweep away the very conception of natural law, which conception is a new birth in the world; make it impossible for our souls to be touched with that religious sense of unity which now is ours when in the falling of a pebble and the sailing of a star we behold one and the same central force and law; landlock us once more within the limits of the horizon, and let us again see in the incidents of nature, not order and everlasting perfection, but at best only celestial caprice; and who will say that we should not lose truth and spiritual impression which reveal God to every eye, and feed and enlarge every soul? Who will deny that all this knowledge is part of that by which our spirits are this day expanded, our hearts this day touched and awed?"* If that the life of a tree comes from a nymph in it seem a thought that makes the tree more glorious and mysterious, this is only because we have not learned to see the glory and mystery of ONE LIFE joining all trees and all other things in ONE BODY. Men can invent no way by which anything hath a countenance so grand as it hath in its own place in NATURE'S ORDER.

Thus, when we have given up the miracles as facts, and know that they could not happen as they are told, three great effects follow in our view of the Bible. One is that, not being dazzled and blinded by these showy and glittering things, we shall see the true beauty and worthy things of the Bible, which are sober, solemn, serious. These are the efforts of the human soul to utter its faith and worship; the lofty hymns of praise, prayer or peace; the picture of human struggles, passions, pains, victories in the slow growth of knowledge and of religion—strength, weakness, hope, birth, death, suffering, pity, love. These are the things of the Bible which endear it to the heart, and to the mind, and help us to know mankind and God's dealing with us better, by reason of the moving and wonderful picture of human toils, sorrows and joys so far away.

Another effect is that not being buried any longer in the disorder, derangement and litter of miracles, our eyes are uncovered to see the sublime order of nature which goes steadily

*David A. Wasson.

on, with no room in it for miraculous influence, nay, between grass-blade and star not room enough for one miracle, gathering all creatures and things into one infinite harmony which is never disturbed. In this unity the Bible itself is included. We see it in its place; not outside of the infinite movement, but in it, a part of it, joined with all Nature, and giving us a sight of the natural unfolding of religious thought.

Another effect is that we have nobler thoughts of God when we have turned utterly away from the miraculous tales of his acts. If we think of him as the magical stories show him, he will seem a king who often finds that he has made mistakes, who repents him of his acts and constantly is correcting his creation, who grows angry and inflicts vengeance by monstrous deeds of power. But if we think of God, as a sight of nature's glorious order will lead us to think of him, he will be the One who lives in all, the Eternal, Infinite, Perfect Order and Life, in all things and all creatures, and filling souls with light and joy; the "Path, Motive, Guide Original and End" of the glories of life and of the serenity of death, the Being of our being "in whom we live and move," "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." When we have turned away from the miraculous stories, we see the Bible, in better relation with these higher thoughts of God, uttered in its most sublime and devout psalms and prayers.

"It is not in nature to respect the false and yet reverence the true." Wollaston made it the essence of religion simply to acknowledge everything to be what it is. To empty out error is to make more room for truth. We have nothing to fear; for we may be sure that when we see *anything* more truly, *all things* will be glorified. "Let me really *know* one divine thing," said John Weiss, "though it compels me to unlearn half a dozen predilections, and I am seeing so much of God instead of a considerable portion of myself."

So far, now, I have spoken of one class of things which we must drop from our view of facts in the Bible. We have to own that they happened not as they are told, but are forms in which other facts or thoughts are expressed — miraculous

stories, so many in the Bible, so interesting and simple when understood truly, but otherwise misleading, confusing, deranging. Now, I come to other kinds of things also in the Bible which we have to look on as untrue for us in spirit. They are facts, indeed, and important facts when we study the history which the Bible contains; but they hold not any spiritual value for us, nor moral worth. They cannot guide us nor give rules for conduct or feeling. If we should follow them, we should be doing foolish or wrong, or even barbarous and cruel, deeds. These are the local and temporary things in the Bible, belonging to times and conditions long past, and below the spirit of our milder and better times. Let us look at these more closely, by some examples of them; whereby we may see that in giving up these as revealed commands of God, learning that they are only stepping stones or halting places in a nation's growth, we are clearing our minds to know better the nobler uses of the Bible, beholding in its great and lasting truths the face of religion itself.

Now, to lead the way to this knowledge, we have simply to think of this, that nothing is found ready-made, mature or perfect; but everything grows and unfolds. We used to think the Bible contained a religion all complete and ready, the true religion, one and the same in all parts of the book. No doubt many persons think so now. They reason not about it, nor compare one part with another to see if all have the same spirit and equal worthiness.

Many persons read the Bible through in course again and again, thinking they do something religious. But in truth they only take the good things, bad thing and neutral things as all of the same worth; by which they fail to dwell on the great and true things till their quality shines, because they spend so much time on the little and false. Indeed, it is even worse than this; for in old Scriptures the grand, true and lasting things are never so many as the false and fleeting. The great thoughts that uplift and thrill us are very few and simple; but each is so deep that they suffice to draw from forever. But the local and temporary things, the rites, customs, prejudices, events, thoughts, which were the groping of the people after the true, the simple, the infinite—these are very many, various, some-

times crowded together almost without end, and continually changing from age to age. So that if we give heed to these transient things in the Bible, so we shall be lost in the multitude of them as to have neither mind nor time to know the simple, life-giving and glorious things of it. It is these few, simple and great things, moreover, which are the same in all religions and Scriptures. Wherefore, if we miss these in our own path, our minds never will widen to the fellowship of humanity. The unceasing gropings of the early peoples, sometimes very blind, often pitiful, always touching, helped those primitive men, who thus sought the infinite and eternal; but they blind us if we fill our eyes with the clouds of gropings instead of with the holy things sought by them.

We know that in the Bible we see religion in process of growing. We behold the Hebrew race changing from wandering tribes, loosely connected, to a compact nation. This was not a quick change. We can trace it going on for many hundreds of years, through exciting events, sometimes terrible struggles. And side by side with this wonderful change, we can see religion growing, coming forth from low forms into a higher and purer state. Thus, in the Bible we find two great orders of fact, the things toward which the people and their religion were going, and the things which were the different points or stages on the way. We may call these two orders of fact, the end and the means; or the local and the universal; or the temporary and the everlasting. The difference between them is that the universal and everlasting things, to which all religion tends, exist for themselves alone; but the other things, the local and temporary, exist only for the sake of the higher things, being the efforts of men to reach the divine and unchangeable.

Therefore in the Bible we must look for the great and universal truths toward which we see religion going; but we must treat the local and temporary things as simply bygone and done. Thus when we read in a psalm (ciii),

“ Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits:

* * *

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercy.

* * *

Like as a father pitieth his children,
So the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

or in the tender Hosea (xi., xiv.)

“They knew not that I healed them!
I drew them with human cords, with cords of love;
* * *
I will heal their backsliding and love them freely;”

and compare these thoughts with the savage fury of the Lord when he put whole cities under the ban and ordered all the people, even the women and children to be killed; and with his cruelty even to the Israelites when they vexed him;—we see that in the psalm-singer and in the gentle prophet religion has grown up to the thought of a wide, tender, just and pitiful Providence, starting from the thought of a deity profuse in favors to a chosen few but fierce and cruel toward others. Thus again, when we read of the many sacrifices and other rites enjoined in the Bible, and we see that the Israelites could not bear to come to the Lord empty-handed, but wished to appease him with gifts, offerings, sacrifices of animals, and even human sacrifices and killing of children; and then read the words of Micah (vi.),

“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord
And bow myself down before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
With the sacrifice of calves a year old?
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
With ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my first-born for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He hath showed thee, O man, what is good,
And what the Lord doth require of thee;
What but to do justly, to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with thy God,—”

we see that religion has grown from outward things, low forms and cruel sacrifices, to justice, mercy, humility and goodness of heart. When we read of the false and wily plot of Jacob by which he spoiled Esau of his father's blessing and gained it himself, and find that, in spite of his base treachery, he gained the full favor of the Lord and that favor was shown him in a beautiful and ecstatic dream while he was flying from Esau's wrath; and then turn to the words of a psalm (xxiv.),

“Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
He hath clean hands and a pure heart;
Who hath not inclined his soul to falsehood,
Nor sworn deceitfully;”

and to Isaiah's words (xxxiii.),

"He that walketh righteously and speaketh the truth,
 He that despiseth the gain of oppressions,
 That closeth his hands from holding bribes,
 That stoppeth his ears so as not to hear of blood,
 And shutteth his eyes so as not to behold iniquity,—
 He shall dwell on high."

we find that religion had bowed before a deity who could bless a low and hateful cunning with success and favor; but that it had grown out of this low state to be opposed to lies and treachery. Now, when we see these great differences in the Bible touching religion and the nature of God, on the one side anger, fury, cruel sacrifices, base plots, and on the other side mercy, pitifulness, truthfulness and the simple religion of the heart—surely we cannot think these alike, and of the same excellence. We see that the love, goodness and simplicity are universal and lasting thoughts toward which religion was moving; and that the sacrifices, cunning and cruelty were the local and temporary form on the way. And when we see this clearly, cease to trouble ourselves with the by-gone stages of the great movement, and mingle them no longer in our mind with the true and pure picture of religion, then the universal, simple, everlasting thoughts, toward which all the motion was setting, we shall see shining unobscured in beauty and power. Thus religion seems higher and nobler, and the Bible a grander vehicle of it.

But let us take a closer look at the partial and temporary things of the Bible which fall away. It would be a long and useless task to take them all one by one; for, as I have said, they are very many, and the great truths toward which they are growing, are few and alone in their sublimity. But the partial things, belonging to the stages of growth, may be looked at many at a time, in groups; since they spring up in different ways, and those that arise in the same way have a likeness to each other. In fact, we may collect them all into two great groups—those that relate to place or to the locality in which the people lived; and those that relate to time, or to the duration and different stages of the people's development.

First among the passing and shifting things that relate to place I will mention customs. Every place has its customs. Sometimes they can be traced to other places from which they came, or far back to some known beginning in the place where they are found; but very often nothing is known of their origin

or age. They simply are found in a particular place, and nowhere else, and no one knows how they came there. Often these customs have no part in the religion of the place; but sometimes they are religious customs; and the older and more mysterious they are, the more they will be likely to gather around religion. Now, there are many such customs in the Bible, which are put forth as a part of religion in that great book. Yet we can see very plainly that they are things having no needful part in simple religion; and that often no one knows, and the Jews themselves knew not, how or when they sprang up. The observance of the Sabbath is such a custom. Moses did not ordain it as a new thing; he found it existing. But perhaps he changed and turned it into a special devotion to the god Yahweh, whom he wished the people to worship alone or chiefly. No one knows how old it is, or where it arose. The week of seven days is found nowhere else, except among the Egyptians, and the special day of rest nowhere but among the Israelites. Very likely the week arose from the worship of the seven planets, the sun, the moon, Mars, Mercury, Venus, Jupiter and Saturn, which were known from very ancient times; wherefore seven always has been held a sacred and mysterious number. Very likely one of these days was held especially holy because the god to whom it belonged was especially feared; and it seems plain that Moses, or the movement which bears his name, may have turned this observance toward Yahweh and increased its sanctity. But all this is uncertain, lost in the remote past. The Jews themselves not always observed the Sabbath.* Not till a very long time after Moses did they become very strict about it, and some were much more strict than others. Yet this custom, of which so little is known, has been lifted by many people into a necessary part of religion, as actually commanded by God; because in reading the Bible the eye has not been fixed on the great and everlasting thoughts toward which religion was moving, but on the passing things which were simply like fleeting waves in the motion.

Other partial and passing things arising from place, spring from climate and from geographical features. As it is plain that the climate in which a people lives, the earth's features

* Nehemiah xiii., 15.

of plain, mountain and sea, fertile lands or deserts, and the heat or cold, must affect deeply the character of the people, so it is certain these things will affect their religion also, and especially in the beginning. For at first men are not able to weigh one phase of nature against another and pierce to the meaning of the whole; but they take for the whole the one place where they are. If the people live where the earth is fertile and the sea at hand, or ample lakes and rivers, it is likely they will be shepherds, fishermen and tillers of the soil. The religious rites of such people are gentle, like their occupations. But if a tribe live in dense forests where many wild beasts roam; or in rocky and hilly places where they must hunt in order to live, they will be warlike and fierce; and the religious rites of such people are wild, harsh and cruel. Among the earliest objects of worship are the powers of nature, the sun, the winds the rain, the sea, the rivers, the forces of the earth. Now, when a people lives where these powers are gentle and helpful, where the sun shines temperately, the winds are peaceful, storms rare or slight, the earth bountiful, so that plenty and quiet surround the people, the gods they worship are kind and placable, even complacent and pleasure-loving, and the religious rites are not only gentle and humane but sometimes even sink into debauches and sensual excesses. When a tribe, on the other hand, inhabits a rough and barren country, rocky and wild, exposed to floods or fierce storms, or to a scorching and untempered sun, their gods are fierce, cruel, revengeful, and they are worshiped with harsh and bloody rites; but also they are austere, stern, pure and holy. Among the eastern nations from whom our ideas come, the place of punishment hereafter was thought to be a fiery furnace, because their hot climate gave them a terror of heat and a pining for coolness; but among arctic people, hell is a place of perpetual freezing, because their climate makes them dread the cold and long for heat. Now, some of the temporary things in the Bible sprang from such influences of climate. The Hebrews had an austere and holy god, Jehovah or Yahweh, because their ancient seats were in a sterile and forbidding country, where men had to work to live; but he was also cruel and harsh as well as holy, and therefore the religion of the people had many fearful

rites in it, and their history is full of religious terrors. But these we see to be only the struggles of human hearts to find the true and eternal among the conditions in which they were placed. It is a history full of a terrible kind of pathos, of a great but sombre magnificence too; but we must not take these wild harsh things as part of religion, but as springing from the conditions of the people while they were seeking pure religion. They were the partial and passing things on the way, while the human heart was going toward the everlasting, sublime, simple thoughts of religion.

Another way, depending on place, in which partial and shifting elements entered into the growth of religion in the Bible was by historical events and influences. The different peoples whom the Jews met in their wars and trading, affected their character and their religion. Thus they gathered ideas which sprang not up among themselves at first, or they changed or intensified thoughts which they had already. I will take one example of such historical influence. About six hundred years B. C., the Jews were conquered by the Chaldeans and carried off prisoners to Babylon. After they had lived there about fifty years, Cyrus subdued the Chaldeans and permitted the Jews to return to their old homes. Many did so, but also many stayed in Babylon and remained a long time in close contact with the Persians. These Jews were not unmindful of their country, race or religion. They kept a warm interest in the fortunes and efforts of their brethren who had returned to Judea, in the temple which they rebuilt, and in all the religious hopes and prides of their race. Indeed they studied their religion so much that they collected and drew up careful laws and rules for it, which were taken to Jerusalem and became very sacred and powerful. But also they were influenced by Persian thoughts from which they took some new ideas or some changes in their own old notions. One instance was a belief in wicked spirits or bad angels and especially in one ruling wicked spirit, Satan, which now began to take deep root among the Jews, from the Persian influence. Before this the Jews had ascribed everything to their god, Yahweh or Jehovah. He, they said, did everything, made everything, the bad and harmful things as well as the good things. But it was hard for them to think that the deity

whom they believed to be so holy and so favorable towards his people could make also so much evil for them to bear. Now, the Persians had an easy way of meeting this trouble. They believed in two principles or powers, a good one and a bad one; and from these two came, they said, the strife of good and evil in the world. This thought the Jews took, and henceforth the belief in Satan and in his wicked spirits grew and prevailed, so that we find it appearing in a very strong form in the New Testament, where Satan is said to tempt Jesus, and do many things; and his demons are constantly bringing diseases and miseries among men. Now, this is one of the things in the Bible which we must simply put away. We cannot think there is any arch-wicked spirit who delights in evil, whose whole business is to struggle with the good power of God and to prowl among men to do them all the harm he can and to carry them off to his horrible home if possible. But we can see clearly how this idea crept into the Bible, whence it came, and even when it began to be taken.* So that if we use this knowledge in reading the Bible, we shall not fall into the foolish thought that Satan and his imps are a part of religion and do really exist, because the Bible speaks of them. We shall see that they belong not to the simple and grand ideas toward which religion was going slowly, with so much pain and struggle, but still going; but that they are among the passing things on the way, got by the Jews from a foreign source and taken by them just as they might have adopted some art or industry.

From the temporary things in the Bible which arose from the conditions of the *places* the people lived in, turn now to those changing and fleeting things which arise from the mysterious fact of *time*.

One of the chief of these is general ignorance. It takes time to learn anything. It takes a very long time to learn much. Men have been hundreds of hundreds of years learning

* The designation "The Devil" occurs not at all in the Old Testament. The proper name "Satan" is in Job i, ii, where he is a good angel whose duty is to serve as opponent or prosecutor and push the case against Job as far as possible and put him to the most thorough trial; in Zechariah iii, where he appears as in opposition in such a manner as to incur reproach or rebuke; finally in i Chronicles xxi third century B. C.), where he is given a distinctly evil character. These four places contain all that is said of Satan in the Old Testament; but in the New Testament the name abounds, as does also the designation "The Devil."

about the most common things around them—what rain is, how the winds rise, how plants grow, what light and heat and sound are, how the sun shines, how the stars move, and other countless things, some of which indeed we still understand very little. The ancient Hebrews knew nothing of these things, and the Bible is full of their ignorance. They thought the Creator made the earth and the heavens in a few days, and then brought all the beasts to Adam to be named. They supposed that the earth was a plain with a crystal lid arched over it; and above the arch their deity had his palace with troops of angels to do his bidding and with hosts of stars over which he ruled. They believed their god came down from his palace sometimes to walk on the earth, and then made bargains with men and with other creatures. If wild beasts and birds ceased to annoy the people, they said, Yahweh had made a covenant with these creatures by which they were persuaded to be quiet.*

Now, this ignorance did no harm to these ancient men. They were learning as quickly as they could. They had a great deal to do in striving with powers of nature which they understood not. They had to pass through many steps of thought while they were learning; and they toiled along very well. A great deal of our happiness springs from their labor, because they did their parts so earnestly and so well. But their ignorance which harmed them not, would harm us very much, if, being so many hundreds of years forward in knowledge, we now should go back to this ignorance for our religion. Yet, so we do, if we take these old ideas, which were only steps on the way, because the people had not had time to learn any more,—if we take these, I say, to be the high and heavenly religion of nature toward which the soul of a great race was going. This is to read the Bible, not as living intelligences now, but as if we lived when the Bible was making. This is to mistake a stage of progress toward religion, as the people did who were in it, for the purer and grander religion to which they were going. But we have looked on that noble religion, as they reached it; we have heard the songs and the psalms of it, and read its simple yet infinite thoughts; and we ought not to make that mistake.

* See Hosea ii., 18: compare Gen. ix., 10.

Another group of ideas in the Bible which we have to leave behind us, as indeed the people that once cherished them left them behind, is those forms of thought which make the natural order of development. Not only did not religion rise instantly mature and perfect in the Bible, and not only does it never appear thus in history, but it follows always a like manner of growth and passes through like stages everywhere. This is because the human mind is the same in all places, and unfolds in the same way. Therefore there is a law of the growth of religion, a method or order according to which the transient stages on the way appear and disappear, while the people go toward pure and simple religion. The first form of religion is the worship of all manner of lifeless objects; anything whatever, no matter how small, or ugly, or grotesque, may be worshiped at this first stage, even objects made by the hands of the people themselves. But the objects are conceived to be living and powerful, in some sense, because of a spirit or soul dwelling in them. The worship springs from fear. The gods and the people are equally selfish, and the worship consists in gifts, sacrifices and servile ceremonies, by which to appease the gods and win their favor. Signs of a higher stage appear when the people worship great or living objects in nature like trees, large bodies of water, animals and especially the sun, moon and stars. These stages of religion often are found together, the people worshiping many things at once, from unhewn stones to the stars. This religion belongs to the tribal condition of the people, before national life has begun. Then comes another stage; the tribes become a nation, common traditions are handed down, and the many different objects of worship pass into a number of "great gods each ruling some separate part of nature or of the life of men." This is polytheism. Gradually, either by the supremacy of one of the gods who grows so great that all the others are neglected for this one, or by other ways, another stage enters; the many gods vanish and only one is worshiped. At the same time a holy book, a scripture, a law arises, which is the sacred rule and body of the religion, containing the word of its wonders, the forms of its worship and its poetry and precepts. Finally these ideas gradually are elevated, chastened, spiritualized, by the growth of knowledge and by the softening of manners and of feelings.

The last stage,—simple, pure, natural religion is reached. Now these stages are seen plainly in the Bible. Early in their history the people worshiped stones;* and indeed for many years after Moses, they are found worshiping many different gods.† But they had one god whom they thought greater than all the rest, Jehovah or Yahweh, as especially Israel's god. There were other gods, but Yahweh was above all, and was the god of Israel alone, and Israel could have no other. The next step was to call the other gods "false gods," and to say that Yahweh alone was a living spirit and true God. After this, the thought of Yahweh was chastened, glorified and endeared, till the merciful and holy image seen in the psalms and prophets arises. Side by side with this movement, is a like softening and chastening of religious rites. We see them in the Bible, coarse, riotous, and even cruel, as in the story of Abraham and Isaac, and of Jephtha's daughter; we see them also grow better and more chastened, till even the spiritual thought is attained, and Jesus says, "God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;" and a psalmist sings (ii.),

"O Lord open thou my lips,
That my mouth may show forth thy praise,
For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it;
Thou delightest not in burnt offering.
The sacrifice which God loveth is a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Here in sayings like this of Jesus and like this of the psalm singer we stand on the heights of the Bible, on the grand and simple religious thoughts which come out of the human heart by nature and always thrill the soul. To this the people with their religion were struggling, climbing, through all their strange, wild, wonderful, pathetic history, for so many hundreds of years. Here we rest. Here we fasten our eyes. All other things are but stopping places and stages on the way to simple religion, enshrined at last in the psalmist's pious prayer.

Let me sum up these facts in a few lines. This is the truth—that we have not in the Bible a religion ready-made for us, complete and perfect, consistent and equally good in all

* See "Bible for Learners." Vol. I., chap. xxiii. For example of ascribing some kind of power or consciousness to stones, see Joshua, xxiv., 26-27; also Gen. xxviii., 18-22.

† This fact is mentioned abundantly in the prophets, and throughout the Old Testament: *e. g.* Hosea (about 800 B. C., 500 years after Moses) ii, 8; xiii, 2; iv, 17; xi, 2.

parts of the Book, divinely ordained and communicated. This, I say, we have not. It were not in the order of nature, which is an order of growth. But, as in all other religious records, so in the Bible, we have religion growing, from feeble, low and wild beginnings in strange fancies and barbarous rites, to the few simple but mighty faiths clothed with power to heal and bless the child and sage alike. Therefore the Bible holds one order of facts which are the thoughts of religion to which the people are growing, and another of facts which are only the stages and forms of the growth as it takes them up and then drops them, on its way. Therefore we read and value the great Book well when we search it for the simple, immutable and eternal truths of natural religion which were the aim of the struggle and the motion; but we read it ill and miss this simple sublimity if we mingle therewith the shifting forms and "broken lights" on the way.

This truth is a very plain one. When we hear Jesus saying, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you and pray for them that use you despitefully and persecute you," and on the cross, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and then we read David's curses on his enemies (if David wrote psalm cix.),

"May his days be few
And another take his office!
May his children be fatherless
And his wife a widow!
May his children be vagabonds and beggars,
And seek their bread far from their ruined dwellings!
May a creditor seize on all that he hath,
And may a stranger plunder his substance!
May there be none to show him compassion
And none to pity his fatherless children!—"

we see that we are in the presence of two very different spirits, and that one is good and one is bad. Nay, we may turn from the bad and cursing spirit to a devout and beautiful song perhaps also by David (Ps. cxxxix.),

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit,
And whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend into heaven thou art there!
If I take the wings of the morning
And dwell in the uttermost part of the sea,
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me!
If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me,
Even the night shall be light about me.
Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee,
But the night shineth as the day."

“The sweet notes of David’s prayer,” says Theodore Parker, “his mystic hymn of praise, so full of rippling life, his lofty psalm which seems to unite the warbling music of the wind, the sun’s glance and the rush of the lightning; which calls on the mountain and the sea and beast and bird and man to join his full heart,—all these shall be sweet and elevating; but we shall leave his pernicious curse to perish where it fell.”

Here, in conclusion, may I not look briefly at some of the great traits of this great Book, our Scriptures?

No book in the world is so useful and needful for the *study* of religion; and this study is very great and far-reaching. It has been said well that while *religious questions* change from age to age, the *question of religion* is perennial. In these times, religious questions change very fast. They are very different now from those that filled our minds fifty, or even twenty-five, years ago. While yet we are busy with some questions, others loom vast and vague on the horizon. Soon they come whirling down like storm-clouds greater than any before met, so that those already past seem like pleasant gales or easy exercise when we are in the thick of the new tempest. But however the religious questions vary, coming and going, the question of religion is the same, and has been so for many thousands of years, while the shifting forms and transient questions have risen and fallen. Wherefore joyfully we may think that all questions which task us now will pass in like manner, and that the storms of thought always will seem but fresh and vigorous gales when we look back on them, while the power of religion will be the same, to glorify and exercise us. The *study* of religion as a vast fact and interest of mind, a factor in all human movements, an inevitable presence in all nations, races and times,—this never ceases to charm attention and to enforce homage. Now for this study, as I have said, no book

is such a treasury of help and of knowledge as the Bible. For in it we may see, though not the actual beginning of religion, which is lost in far antiquity, yet plain traces of the lowest forms of religious thought; and these we study in their changes and progress to a very high sublimity. For the Bible holds the loftiest and most complete utterance of religion to be found in any Scripture. I say not that it is complete, for no one race, however rich, could have perfect wholeness in such a mystery of life as religion; but it is the *most comp'ete*, the richest, most sublime reach of religious expression attained by any race or any Scriptures.

But to be able intellectually to get this great value from the Bible, two powers of mind are needful, first to understand it, then to judge it. For if we know not what the Bible is, we can not judge it; and if we judge it not, we are not taught from it but subjected to it.

Remember that the Bible is not our only source of religious thought, even though it be the loftiest scripture. From many other sources we have gathered a vast store of food for faith and feeling in religion, by which we get power. This food has been harvested by the large study of Nature as wonderful and holy law in all things, binding the great and small, near and far into one life, from grain of sand to monstrous sun in the heavens, from a little animal which is no more than a drop of jelly to the body of a man; and of history as not a petty or proud play of princes or powers, each doing what it will as if there were no other, but as a field of human movements where laws act which are so strong and vast that they can be seen only when we look far back, or over huge masses of people, because they sweep such immense groups into their action and span such distances of space and time. Now by learning these things we have food for religion, which then grows strong in us to interpret the Bible wisely and truly, and then to judge it in its facts and in its thoughts after we understand it. Surely it is wise and right that our religious knowledge, gathered from all sources, should explain and judge one source thereof, the Bible. Therefore we must use the Bible with this fair and instructed freedom whereby to study religion in it.

Heretofore in this sermon, I have told many things which

the Bible is not, and therewith many things also which it is, relating especially to the history and religion of the Hebrews, and of the human mind. But now I will look a little at its general traits as the literature of a wonderful people during an eventful and tragical history. I can not cast even a glance at that history in detail, in the space which I have, and I have said of it already all that I can say, perhaps all that is needful in this sermon, to show the relation of the Bible and religion. Even to look at the Bible merely as literature in this one discourse, I must look very swiftly, and seize in passing only the great traits of it.

1. The Bible, which is the literature of Israel, is above all things a religious literature. Here we have to take account of that wonderful fact in history which we may call race-endowment, that is, the peculiar quality and character of a people by which it is fitted to make a special contribution to human thought or well-being which no other people has given in so large measure or in so perfect form. However trite it be, let me repeat the main points of this notable fact. If we look at our civilization, we may divide its resources into three great groups. One group we may call Law, meaning thereby all that relates to civil polity, to state-craft, to the joint action and organic oneness of great numbers of men who form thus a community or commonwealth or nation. For this part of our common life, we are indebted mainly to Rome. That mighty city created an empire of law and of civil authority which the whole world accepts. Another group of the resources of our civilization we may call Knowledge, meaning thereby all that relates to our understanding of history, of nature, and of our own minds; also all that underlies the useful and beautiful industries, philosophy, science, mathematics, art. For these things we are indebted to Greece. That land of thought, art and song, "conquered its conquerors," and imposed its letters, its imagination, its beautiful forms, on Rome and on the world. It is not a gracious task to compare such bequests with others, as with the Roman or with the Hebrew, to ask which is the greater. For they are all so mingled in us in our civilization that to withdraw one to look at it by itself, is to mangle all. Rather I would say of all these great gifts which unite in one heritage, as the ancient preacher said,

"All the works of the Lord are good,
And he will give every needful thing in due season.
So that a man can not say, This is worse than that;
For in time they shall all be well approved."

The third group of resources we may call Religion, meaning thereby all that pertains to the feeling of dependence on a higher Power, to the sentiment of the Infinite and Eternal, to the thoughts which bind us to our Origin; to worship, devotion, awe. Also we must include the rule of conduct and the thought of duty. Now for these last elements, the criticism of conduct and the idea of duty, we seem not to owe anything to one people above another. Everywhere this ethical weight of feeling and of thought is met. We find all peoples talking and writing of duty, of the laws and reasons of right conduct, in nearly the same way and with the same deep earnestness. This is a great and glorious fact. But the other heritage which we call religion, the awe and feeling of Infinite Majesty, and of One Eternal Life, as we find it woven with form and worship in our civilization, we owe to the race of Israel. This people had no other message to give, no other possession to bequeath. It never had any "plastic arts, nor rational science, nor political life, nor military organization." But religion with this fiery people was a fervor, a life, a devotion, a fanaticism even, if we take it at its worst estate, the like of which the world knows not elsewhere. This race observed not, nor asked questions, nor reasoned nor doubted. It simply said, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and neither knew nor cared to say more. It, above all the great races, starting from the same low forms of religion, worshipping stones and divers natural objects and many gods, created a grand and devout monotheism, which equally held fast to the whole idea of Deity,—living Will, Thought, Love,—and proclaimed that Deity ONE, Infinite and Eternal. By this thought, they have subdued the world. "The whole world, if we except India, China, Japan and tribes altogether savage, has adopted the religious"* of that race of which Israel is the leading people and the fountain of their religious influence. "The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath us are the everlasting arms;" "My soul thirsteth for God, the living God;" "He is the living God, and steadfast for-

* Renan.

ever;" "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary;" "Hear, O Israel, the Eternal is God! the Eternal is One!"—these are such sayings of its faith as Israel uttered in the highest passages of the Bible, which are very numerous. By them it has given the world its language of religion. When we utter the hopes, the aspirations, the trust, the devotion, the thanksgiving, the dependence, the lowliness and the greatness of the soul, we have no forms so grand, so simple, so lofty as the prayers and faith-cries of Israel.

2. The Biblical literature has a high and pure moral element in it. But in point of morals, it is a noble fact that we may learn of all peoples alike and find the sages of every land full of divination on life's daily duties. Yet not all see the same points with equal clearness or dwell on them with the same force. Sometimes it is said that the ethics of the Bible dwell but little and somewhat meanly on the responsibilities and reciprocities of family life; on the humane virtues toward animals and children; on the duty of guarding health, of mental culture, of public spirit; on the rightful dignity and self-sovereignty of women; on business virtues, prudence, foresight; and it is true that the Bible rather commands than disowns (though with glorious exceptional passages) that form of hatred and strife called the "odium theologicum," which is dissention, aversion and offence for difference in faith. But many of these duties we should not expect to find known to a people whose whole life was theological and religious, whose whole idea of morals would be affected by their stern faith, with no tincture of philosophy. Herein we must gather from all fields, and bring all the peoples to add their portions of insight to the Biblical ethics. Herein, also, we must bring our knowledge from all sources to the judgment of the Bible, that we may see and say wherein its ethics fall short of the needs of many-sided life. For in this very carefully we must beware of being subjected to the Book, by reason of which subjection indeed, many evils, like slavery, persecution, bad-faith, have been excused or approved. But we shall find it very clear in the Bible that no outward forms or observance of religion can make up for evil deeds, and the best

worship is a good and simple heart. "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God." "Not every man that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom; but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven."

"Mark the perfect man and behold the upright;
The end of that man is peace.

"For light is sown for the righteous,
And gladness for the upright in heart."

"The stars in the courses uphold the righteous,
The stones of the field are in league with him."

"I desire mercy and not sacrifices,
The knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."

Also many virtues find high expression, like forgiveness, returning good for evil, and some forms of justice. For these we may read the Bible and find great strength in so reading it, if we read it well, not taking every place alike, but seeing the noble and high things, and cleaving to them for their own value and power.

3. Beauty, very great beauty, is a trait of the Bible. And this beauty is more valuable to us because it is of a peculiar kind, the wealth of oriental imagination with which we come into no familiar contact except in the Bible—a magnificence of imagination, joyous in its splendors. Thus for example a prophet sings of the glory kept in waiting for Israel:—

"O thou afflicted, beaten with the storm, destitute of consolation!
Behold I lay thy stones in cement of vermilion,
And thy foundations with sapphires.
And I will make thy battlements of rubies,
And thy gates of carbuncles,
And all thy borders full of precious stones.

* * *

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
Neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are my ways higher than your ways
And my thoughts than your thoughts.
For as the rain and the snow descend from heaven,
And return not thither,
But water the earth, and make it bear and put forth its increase,
That it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
So shall my word be that goeth from my mouth;
It shall not return to me void.
But it shall bring to pass that which is my pleasure,
And it shall accomplish that for which I send it.
For ye shall go out with joy
And be led forth with peace.

The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing,
And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
Instead of the thorn shall grow up the cypress tree,
And instead of the bramble shall grow up the myrtle tree.

* * *

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox,
And dust shall be the food of the serpent.
They shall not hurt, nor destroy, in all my holy mountain,
Saith the Lord!''*

Sometimes the simplicity is exquisite—"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." I think I may quote for its delicate and blossoming beauty, one of the very few songs of love which the Biblical literature has preserved:

"The voice of my beloved!
Behold, he comes,
Leaping upon the the mountains,

Bounding over the hills,
Like a gazelle is my beloved,
Or a young hind.
Behold he stands behind our wall;
He is looking in at the windows;
He glances through the lattice.
My beloved speaks and says to me,
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!
For lo! the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time for the singing birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in the land;
The fig tree is spicing its green fruit
The vines in blossom give forth fragrance.

* * *

My beloved is mine and I am his;
He feeds among the lilies.
When the day breathes and the shadows flee away,
Come again, my beloved, like a gazelle, or a young hind,
Upon the craggy mountains."†

4. Tenderness is a trait of the Biblical literature. Witness the tenderness that hovers around Jesus, his love for the poor, the forlorn and forsaken, the outcast and despised; his love for his friends, his lament over Jerusalem, the parables of the Prodigal and of the Good Samaritan. In the old Bible, also, there is David's lament for Absalom, the devoted friendship of David and Jonathan, the exquisite pastoral of Ruth, the tender story of Joseph, Nathan's compassionate parable of the poor man's ewe lamb. There is very tender feeling in these and other places, like a soft light through rain drops.

* Is. lv., lxx. † Canticles.

5. A trait of the Hebrew literature in the Bible is its sublimity. This, indeed, is a trait in which it stands not only unequalled but unapproached in all the literature of the world. There are no splendors in any language that equal the vast magnificence and grandeur of places in Isaiah, in the Psalms, and in that wonderful poem, unequalled in the world's treasury, the book of Job. Coleridge says, "Sublimity is Hebrew by birth." A critic has exclaimed what an effect would follow if now suddenly a collection of poems like the Psalms were launched anew on the world, the like never known before. What wonder, delight, awe and praise would arise! But in truth "the ear is accustomed to these admirable productions before the mind can comprehend their meaning or feel their beauty," so that it is very hard, in mature life, to bring the mind to them with that fresh attention which would perceive their power and greatness. The magnificence of the imagery, the stern and strong brevity of the expression, the solemnity of the thought, combine in a sublimity which we can not read without awe. And when we reflect that these mighty writings were not the secret or silent work of a few retired poets waiting for ages to justify their grandeur, but actual addresses and appeals to the people, made to move their conscience or will to definite ends, what a sight opens before us!*

6. Another trait of the Bible is the grand characters that are in it. Moses, a colossal figure in the dim past; Jesus, a wandering peasant whose glory has moved the world; Paul, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Nathan, and, if not on this level, yet mighty, Samuel, David, Saul, Deborah, and many more. These are great figures, the like of which are found crowded in no other literature so small in extent and of one sole people.

* I have met a story of an obscure Scotch peasant, who, calling on business at a gentleman's house, in Edinburgh, saw a bust of Shakespeare and these lines from "The Tempest" inscribed beneath it,

"The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherits, shall dissolve,
And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Leave not a rack behind."

The gentleman seeing the peasant's eyes dwell on these lines, asked him whether he had seen the equal of them in sublimity. The peasant answered, "Yes I have; the following passage in the book of Revelations is much more sublime,—"I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them."

7. Another trait is that these mighty characters are seen in rigorous action. They are not described. Seldom are their features of face or form referred to. But they appear as living and striving parts of the sad, tumultuous, fecund, tragical, majestic history of their race. We see them before us, all human, every muscle tense with their action, and their words flying from burning lips, like fiery ingots rolling from a Titan's forge.

8. Another trait in Biblical literature is the prophets. This great and remarkable order of men, which has so large a part in the history, life and genius of Israel, has no parallel in any other people. They came forth and announced themselves as direct messengers from God. No one appointed them or sanctioned them. Their call was from within, moral and spiritual. They dwelt as might happen, in solitudes, or in communities of their own, or in their ordinary homes; whence they went forth preaching, rebuking kings to their faces, threatening and terrifying, predicting or enforcing woes on all tyranny, and denouncing fiercely whatever was contrary to the faith of Israel. Legends and miracles grew up about them. They were called soothsayers, and looked on themselves as such. They opposed all foreign alliance or union. They were the *fire* at which gathered and burned with a fierce heat the religious life and sometimes the religious fury of the race. These men were very numerous. They even had schools, or some sort of loose training for the office, which has been called "a rude germ of a national university," preserving and intensifying the religion, tradition and zeal of the people. They had discipline, wild music and song, and sometimes frenzied ecstasies. They were a power in the realm as distinct as the monarchy, and sometimes of equal authority. The king must consult them on important measures. They were men of action, abroad among the people, inciting or stirring them, sometimes making and leading revolutions against tyrannical rulers. They nourished and quickened the nation's proud sense of peculiar and chosen dignity. They were benefactors of the ignorant, depositaries of the slender science of the times, healers of disease by simple remedies. They were the people's authors, national historians, orators and poets, and in this capacity the source of the world's most sublime lyrical poetry. This order

of men, as I have said, is a peculiar feature of the Bible and of Hebrew history, the most complete expression of the genius and glory of Israel, more peculiar to Israel than philosophy or art to Greece. It began in zealous ecstasies, which often were frenzied, and grew to be a majestic vocation, a great order in the state. We can hardly bring our minds to imagine such a condition. "Suppose," says Renan, "a solitary dweller in the quarries near our capitals, going thence from time to time to the palaces of sovereigns, forcing an entrance, and in an imperious tone, announcing to kings the approach of revolutions of which he has been the promoter. The bare idea makes us smile. Such, nevertheless, was Elijah." If we read the wonderful literature in the Bible as we ought, attaining a sympathy for it and a knowledge of the mental and moral conditions of the times and people, we shall see these great sights pass before us, this army of prophets with their burning and fiery deeds—a sight astonishing, unique in the history of the world, and sublime.

Thus very swiftly, as by a bird's-eye view from a height, I have glanced at the chief traits of the literature which we call the Bible. Now the question has been in this sermon of the relation of the Bible to religion. Permit me a closing word on that point.

Closely concerned with religion are the three divisions of our mental and moral action, Conduct, Thought, and Feeling. Let us look at these and the Bible together.

1. How stands the Bible related to conduct? If we can read the Bible well, that is if we can take the things which are the true aim of it and not the things which are dropped on the way, we shall find the Scriptures great inspiration to herosim, nobleness, and faithfulness. But if we must try to combine these high things with other things not high, and to treat all parts alike, as of equal truth and beauty because in the same Book, then we shall be confused and misled. A high standard is a great help in conduct. The Bible will give us this if we look at the highest in it. But it gives us no standard if we take all as of the same worth and try to combine the high and low in one. Now, when we consider how much in life depends on our picking out the good and leaving the bad in the mingling

of them in the things about us, we see that thus we use the Bible only as we must use all things, and we shall be helped to judge truly and choose nobly in life if in the Scriptures we judge well and choose the high things.

2. How is the Bible related to thought? This is a very simple matter. The help of thought is to think. Now thinking is arrested if we have a divine revelation in the Bible, perfect, miraculous, requiring therefore an entire submission. We have then not to think, but only to take without question. Besides, more than this, we must take then the poor and the good thoughts, the barbarous and the gentle thoughts, as all of the same worth, joined equally in one divine command. Thus not only is thinking stopped, but all the natural conclusions of thought are confounded and set at naught. Therefore, for the dignity and justice of thought, we must read the Bible not as an issue from heaven with the right to rule over us, but as a growth of earth which we have right and duty to question and to judge. Whereupon we must judge it and fashion it in with our lives, by taking the spirit and aim of its high and grand things, to which religion has been growing within its record. So used, thought remains free, gathering instruction and light.

2. How is the Bible related to Feeling? I have said that religion is older than the Bible and that the Scriptures sprang from it and not religion from them. This is true, but it follows not thereupon that religion gets no help from the Bible. Likewise love is greater than the home and created the home, in the far, misty ages when men began to conceive of the dignity of parental cares and to feel their permanence. But also the home helps, expands, dignifies, chastens and glorifies love. When from animal wandering and chance pairing, the home emerges, it will be a rude form indeed; but it will improve the love a little. The improved love next makes a better home, which again will refine the love. Thus a sweet and pure tradition grows up, the love and the external form of love, which is the home, growing rich and beautiful together. So religion is older than the Bible, but the Bible helps to magnify and glorify religion if it be used well, because the Bible is the expression of the struggle upward of the religious nature of man. Herein is a subtle law manifest which attends all expression. All expression or form reacts

on that which is expressed, to heighten, confirm and enlarge it. Beautiful expression will help the feeling to become more beautiful, which again dignifies the expression, which again chastens the feeling; and so on, in a pleasing and blessed progress. But here is a happy point, to which I pray your attention; when the feeling seeks not only to express itself, but to express itself in a beautiful way, the expression is always, by a blissful law, a little more beautiful than the feeling is at its *common* level. For the expression, and the search for beauty thereby, is a great energy of soul, and lifts the whole being for the time. And, moreover, the feeling is at its highest reach of strength and loveliness when *beauty* of expression is sought. Then this beautiful form reacts on the feeling which produced it to bring the common level of that feeling to this height of beauty to which it dashed upward in the expression. This new level attained, a new wave-crest dashes up a farther height, making a new expression enshrining the best and most beautiful feeling. And so on, as long as feeling can be glorified and expression made beautiful. They grow lovely by necessity together. Therefore the highest, or a very high and noble, expression of feeling, beautiful and lofty, is a very precious possession, a delight to the present feeling, a continual call for it to come up higher, and source of strength for the ascent. Now such expression of religious feeling we have in the Bible, if we set our eyes on the sublime, beautiful and tender things in it—if we take the highest to be that at which all the lower things are aiming and the point to which we should go. Then the grand and lovely things in it, the expression most mighty for dignity, grace and glory which all the ages yet have found for religion, will attract religious feeling continually into its highest regions and bless it with new power, sincerity, life and joy.

Here ends the sermon of the Bible and Religion. At starting I looked not for so long a road. But if it lead any one higher up in the Bible, that is much. If it lead to the Bible and natural religion together, far up the heights of the soul, that is much indeed.

